

The Lighter

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October 2007

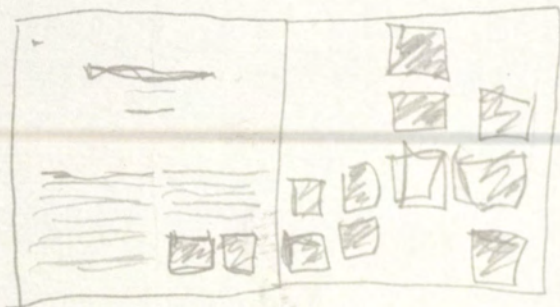
The Lighter Fall 2007

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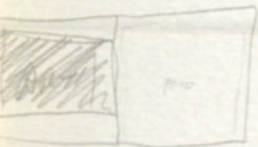
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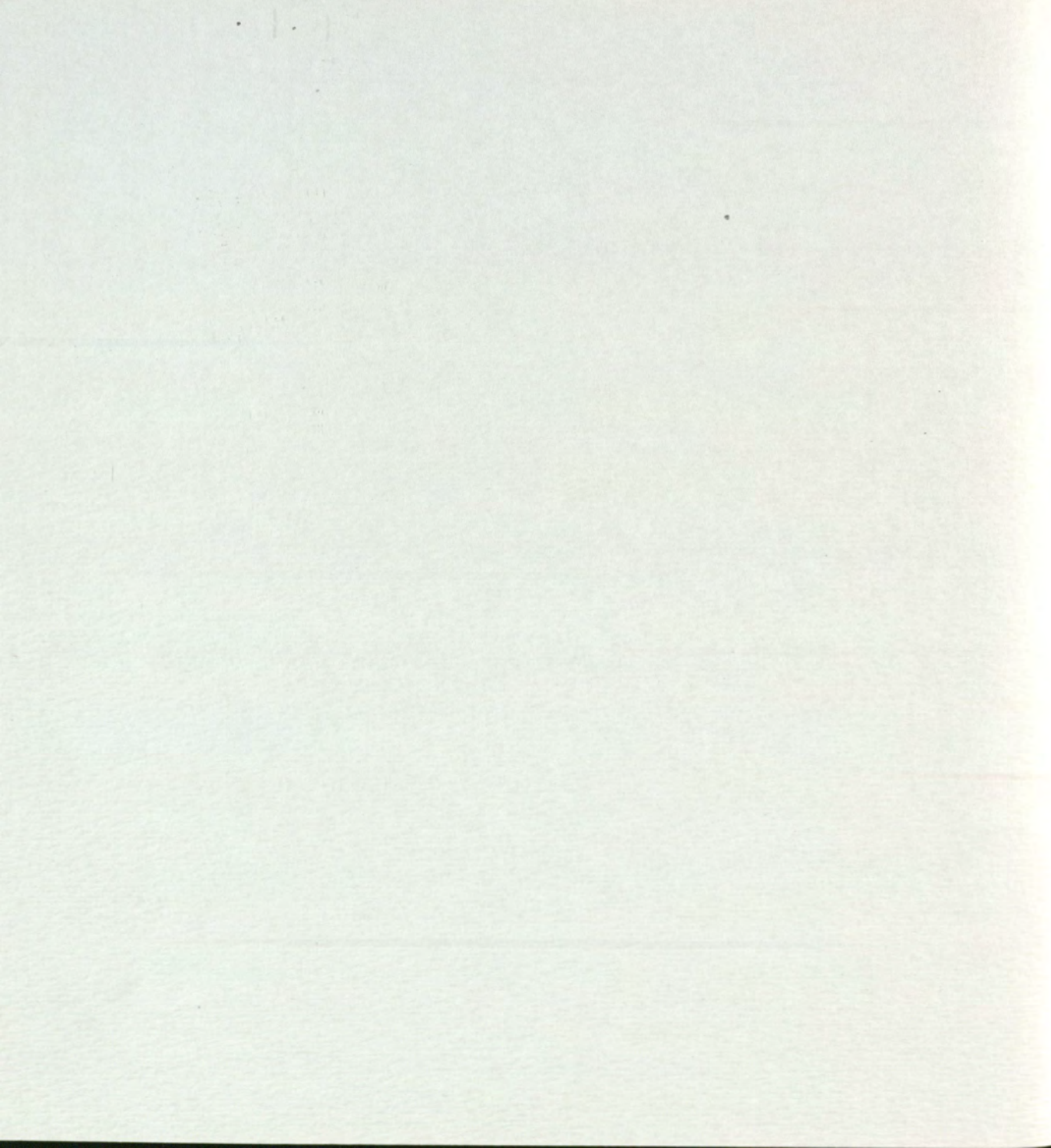
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The Lighter
fall 2007





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All submissions remain anonymous throughout the selection process. The Lighter welcomes submissions from all undergraduate, graduate and law students of Valparaiso University, regardless of race, gender, religious creed or sexual orientation. The editor assumes responsibility for the contents of this publication. The views expressed in the works do not represent any official stance of Valparaiso University.

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THE VULNERABILITIES OF A JOB, WHATEVER THAT IS!

EVAN SCOTT BRYSON

The emotional locus of a literary interview is the romantic date. I would go so far as to modify that supposition further and say romantic *blind* date. Even if we know an author's work, have an appreciation for the words' strength of character and style, and have forgiven any quirks, shortcomings, and seeming egomania because the flap jacket photo is so stunning, the author remains a figment—a friend of a friend you've just gotta meet.

No, I said.

Well how about just for drinks. Real casual—

No.

And I was dead serious. No more interviewing, no more blind dates, please.

The literary interview is valuable. Don't misunderstand me. They really do matter, if only because an author's work is suddenly vivified by her own outside commentary—a sort of funhouse mirrors phenomenon, where refraction and deflection can stand in for interpretation, and language's great carnivale is tempered a few more degrees. Critics and scholars, anyhow, can unearth more bones to slaver over, as they construct a mannequin to adore in their lonely offices. We watch careers snake around the snark and caprice of the author and the interviewer, and can never be certain this really isn't just some dance, some charming hypnotizing deep in the hips. Or pheromones.

These are the words of a nervous hack. A cynic. And nothing could make this more clear, for me, than sitting face to face

for an hour or so with a regarded poet.

Which is to say:

There were two choices for me in writing this introduction/interview section: be professional, or be authentic.

Aha! But another quandary—for I am neither of those: and, then, how to fake either when confronted with the dynamics of the blind date/interview hybrid?

These were ideas that I pitched to Julia Kasdorf as we sat down and began the interview.

She was relaxed and bright-eyed and not as tall as I had imagined on the run over to Huegli Hall. She has strong, earthen facial features—much like van Gogh's potato farmers, only with elegance, with serenity. I was sweating and stripping off a light jacket and then a button-up, and my voice was low and breathy, like it did not want to be heard but rather understood through clairvoyance. I had listened to music in my dorm room to pump me up. I had shaved at the last minute and my neck was bleeding, a little. Ms. Kasdorf had been lunched with a professor and was still warm and enthused, and probably digesting food. (Full disclosure: she had dined with this publication's faculty advisor, Allison Schuette-Hoffman, who studied under Ms. Kasdorf and assured me “[she’s] one of the best human beings I know”—thus why I relented, in the end, to interview.)

And I mentioned my idea about the blind date/interview as

I thought the tape was rolling, and we began to discuss this idea, and I was getting relaxed because Ms. Kasdorf was so relaxed. Her voice was sultry, carried melody, and mine became louder and clearer. I was beginning to feel confident. I had insufficiently prepared for the interview, yes, but there were words being exchanged. The tape was rolling—sentences, from our mouths, were being recorded—The Lighter, per tradition, and despite my crippling anxieties and otherwise indulgent insecurities, would have an interview!

Then forty-five minutes in, I noticed that I really hadn't hit the record button at all:

Evan Bryson: [nervous laughter]
Julia Kasdorf: It wasn't recording...?
EB: [nervous laughter] No it wasn't.
JK: No it—yes it was. [laughter]
EB: I guess what happened was—see—I thought I pressed

play—
JK: Mhmm—
EB: But I pressed pause—
JK: Ooh....

EB: And I was like, "O," and the eff-word just kept coming into the mind, and I thought, like, "Yeah, this is OK."

JK: [laughter]
EB: [sharp intake of breath] So. Yeah. OK.
JK: Ooh, ooh... [recovering] Well this could be interesting.

Now we have to do—
EB: [nervous laughter]
JK: This is like—now OK, that was like the ordinary interview—

EB: [high pitched tremble]
JK: —I've done that interview before.
EB: Yeah. Yeah, totally.
JK: OK, for now, we can do something else...

EB: Yeah.
JK: Because that was the interview you could find online, if you wanted to.
EB: Mm. Yeah.

[interviewer and interviewee jostle the recording device to make sure it is working, and begin to count upwards, assured the interview, this time, is being recorded]

JK: Fifty-six, fifty-eight, fifty-nine—
EB: [nervous laughter]
JK: OK. So we're thinking it's working. [laughter]
EB: [nervous laughter]

[the campus clock-tower chimes in the background—interviewer begins to discuss the clock with interviewee; they resume]

EB: OK, we can totally do this.
JK: Yeah.

[interviewer and interviewee don't, yet; they meander around faculty and waitlisted courses]

EB: OK we're gonna do anecdotes.
JK: OK.

EB: That's what were gonna do to pad out The Lighter interview with.
JK: OK.

EB: [nervous laughter]
JK: [sultry] We've already talked about influences. We've already talked about my childhood. See, this is what every interview has!

EB: Yeah, exactly.
JK: OK, well we're going to do the different interview.
EB: OK.

JK: All right.
EB: Great.
JK: This is going to be the interview-after-the-interview.

EB: Yeah.
JK: I like it.
EB: Um... OK... We'll just—we'll just do a big sort of interview, but I'm thinking... most vivid moment... of, like childhood injury for you?

JK: O, perfect! My first memory. This is so huge.
EB: OK.

JK: My first memory in life, it was probably... Well, before I was three.

EB: Yeah, yeah.
JK: So I was two-something. And it was this huge kind of evening, although I wasn't aware of this. Well—and I'll just tell you the story.

EB: OK.
JK: So I was this little kid out behind a house. It was—my family was living in central Pennsylvania then, on a farm. In an old farmhouse. And I was out behind a house wandering around.

And there was a road along the lawn, and across the road I saw my family's cat, Sally-Anne. And the lawn—um, there was kind of a gulley, sort of a steep bank between the lawn and the road and then another steep bank and my cat was across there. So I decided I was gonna cross the road.

EB: Yeah.

JK: To get to the cat... And I did. I started crossing the road, and, um, was hit by a car.

EB: That's funny you say that—in my head I was like, “No, she won't get hit by a car.”

JK: Got hit by a car. And I don't know if I remember this or if I've reconstructed this, but my thought is that I remember waking up, and my shoe had flown off.

EB: [laughter]

JK: Um, and it was one of those little leather buckle shoes little girls wear with the flowers punched out in the toe. And my father is leaning over me and this other, strange man is leaning over me, and they were very concerned. Um. And my father who at that time was working at a medical center, said, “Well, we've got to take you to the emergency room. I think you're okay, but you know they want to do x-rays.” And the man was very distraught, and the car—you know this is the day of those big rounded cars—

EB: Yeah.

JK: —that you see in old movies, you know, the sort of Fifties cars. So we went to the medical center and I remember thinking, “I don't know why all these grown-ups are so concerned, and why they're saying I'm so brave... I'm just fine.” And it turned out that this man who hit me was racing to the medical center because his wife was having a baby in the hospital, and it was also the first night that my mother was a nurse back to work. She was working the evening shift. And so it was the first night that she had left her children in the care of their father. So it became symbolic of this enormous event—

EB: Yeah.

JK: —right. And then the other thing that happened was that Sally-Anne, um, had some kittens, and—

EB: [laughter]

JK:—we had these little baby kittens, and then she got hit and killed on that road, sometime, sometime after that. And so then we had this box of screaming kittens in the kitchen. And my mother would come home at night from the evening shift and have to try and feed these kittens and it was just a disaster. And so my father killed them all in the basement, which is—

EB: How did he kill them?

JK: Um, he hit them in the back of the head with a hammer.

EB: My dad would just step on them.

JK: Ooh.

EB: Yeah.

JK: It's the farmer's solution, to a problem, you know. Um. So that's my first memory, really, and it has to do... And there's all these lessons, of course, that come out of this memory. I've written an essay about it, actually, that why—. And it all started

by thinking, “What the first thing you remember?” But, you know—

EB: Yeah.

JK: —they're lessons like, If the mother isn't around, the babies get killed. And—

EB: [laughter]

JK: —If the mother worked, if the mother does her own work, somebody has to die.

EB: Yeah.

JK: Things like that. So, kinda scary and intense.

[here on, the interviewer offers counter anecdotes about his father taking care of him when his mother worked; the interview ends with the clanging of bells]

I offer this exchange, reproduced as fastidiously as I could manage without undo insipience because, well, this is how the interview really went. Because only fifteen minutes of its sometimes tedious, sometimes fascinating explorations were committed to tape, Ms. Kasdorf suggested we continue the interview in the same vein for the following afternoon, and enthused by the cat-killing story, I obliged. I even had my openers for the next day:

What have been your encounters with the Pennsylvania culture?

What are your ghost stories?

We met again. I was feeling intrepid, I asked my questions, and she told me she didn't have any ghost stories. From there, the second interview devolved into my kind fumbblings and her kinder patience—there is no need to reproduce my weak entreaties, the drawn out sighs. I was a little crushed, I admit. For the last seven minutes or so, I suggested we draw each other instead of talking. Then I went outside on the Huegli lawn, into the abandoned Career Fair tent, and talked to my brother about what an uncomfortable disaster I procured. If not for Julia Kasdorf, then for me.

Two bad dates, I said. Count 'em.

And he told me I sucked and that heartened me.

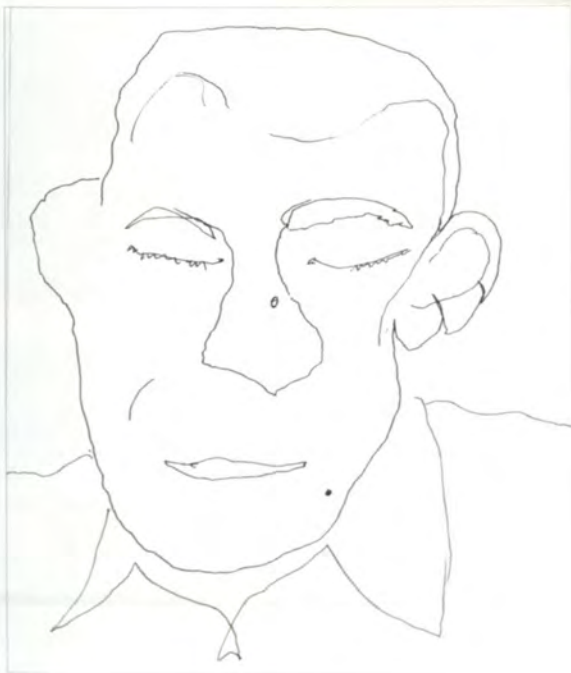


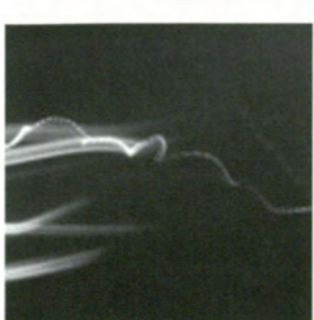
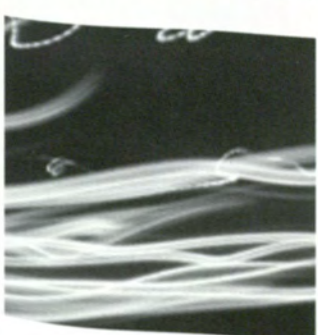
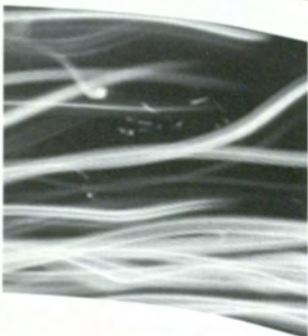
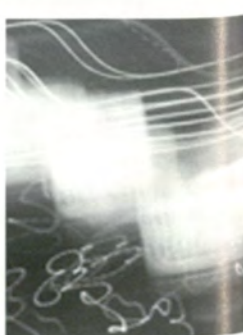
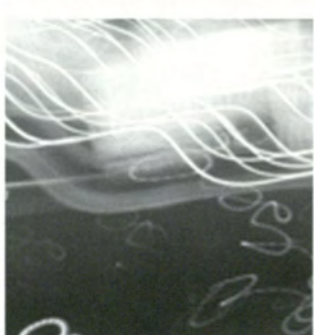
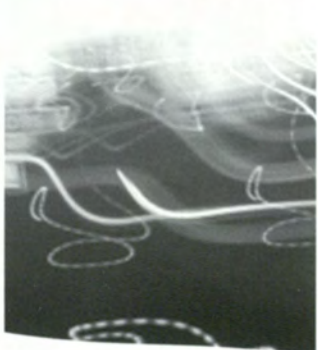
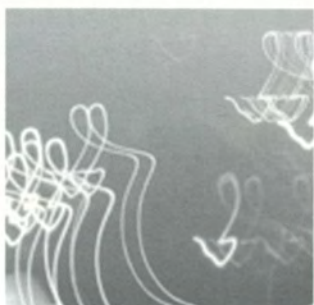
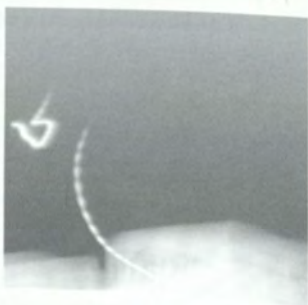
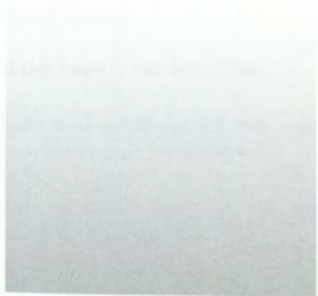
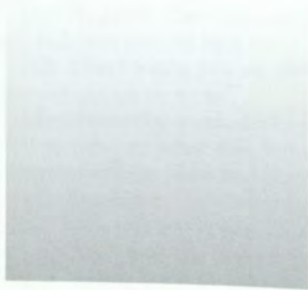
figure 1: EB as drawn by JK

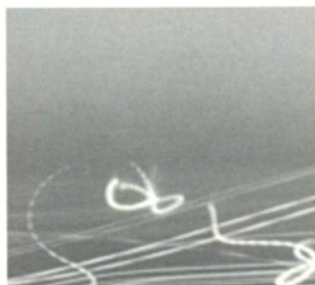
Evan Scott Bryson is a student attending Valparaiso University.



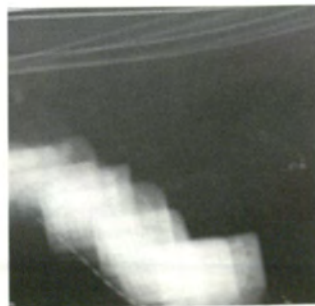
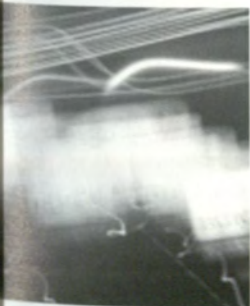
figure 2: JK as drawn by E.B

Julia Spicher Kasdorf is a writer of poetry and prose, and directs the MFA program in creative writing at Pennsylvania State University. Her books include two collections of poetry, *Live's Striptease* and *Sleeping Preacher*, and she has composed biographic and essayistic writing about Joseph W. Yoder and Mennonite and Amish culture in America.



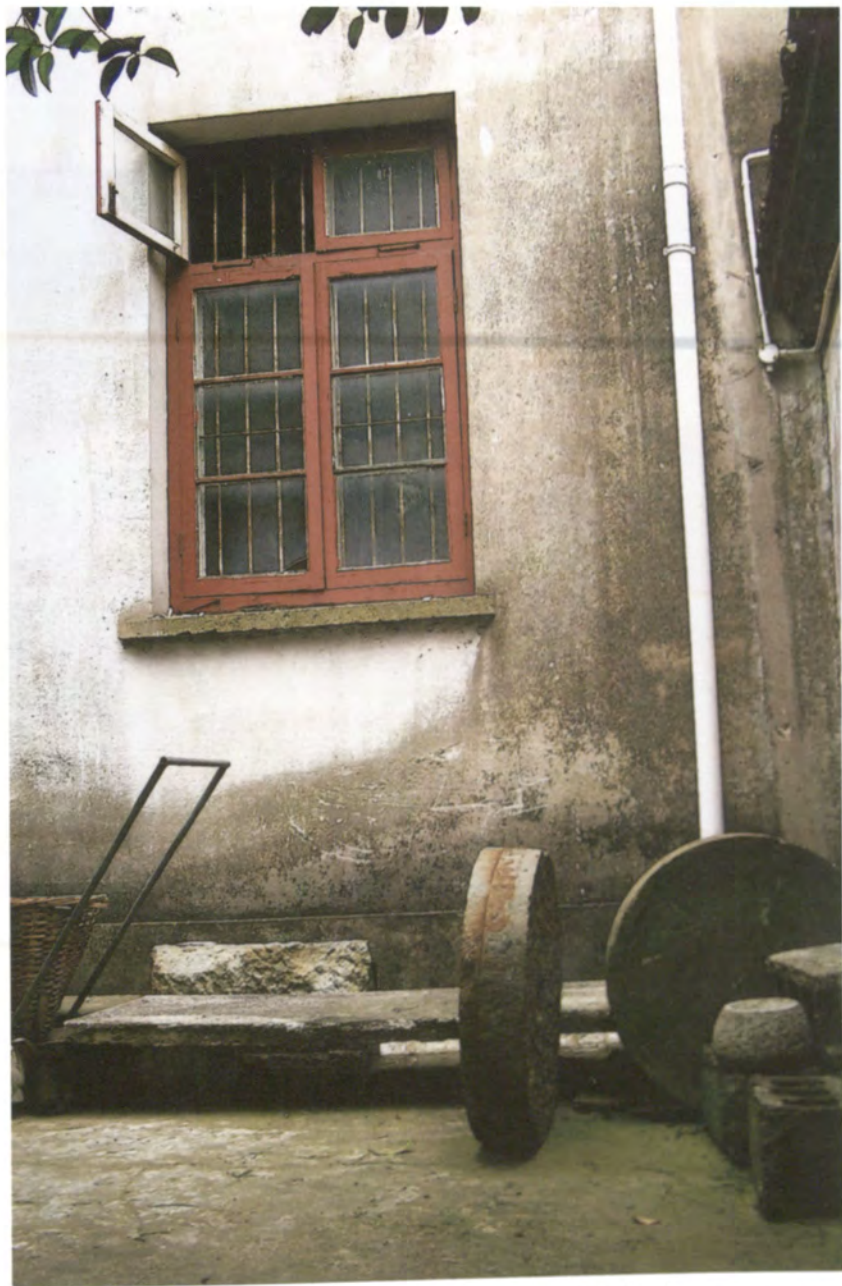


| art





(untitled) | KATHERINE COWAN



(untitled) | JAMES STRASBERG





The Way is Shut | JAMES STRASBERG



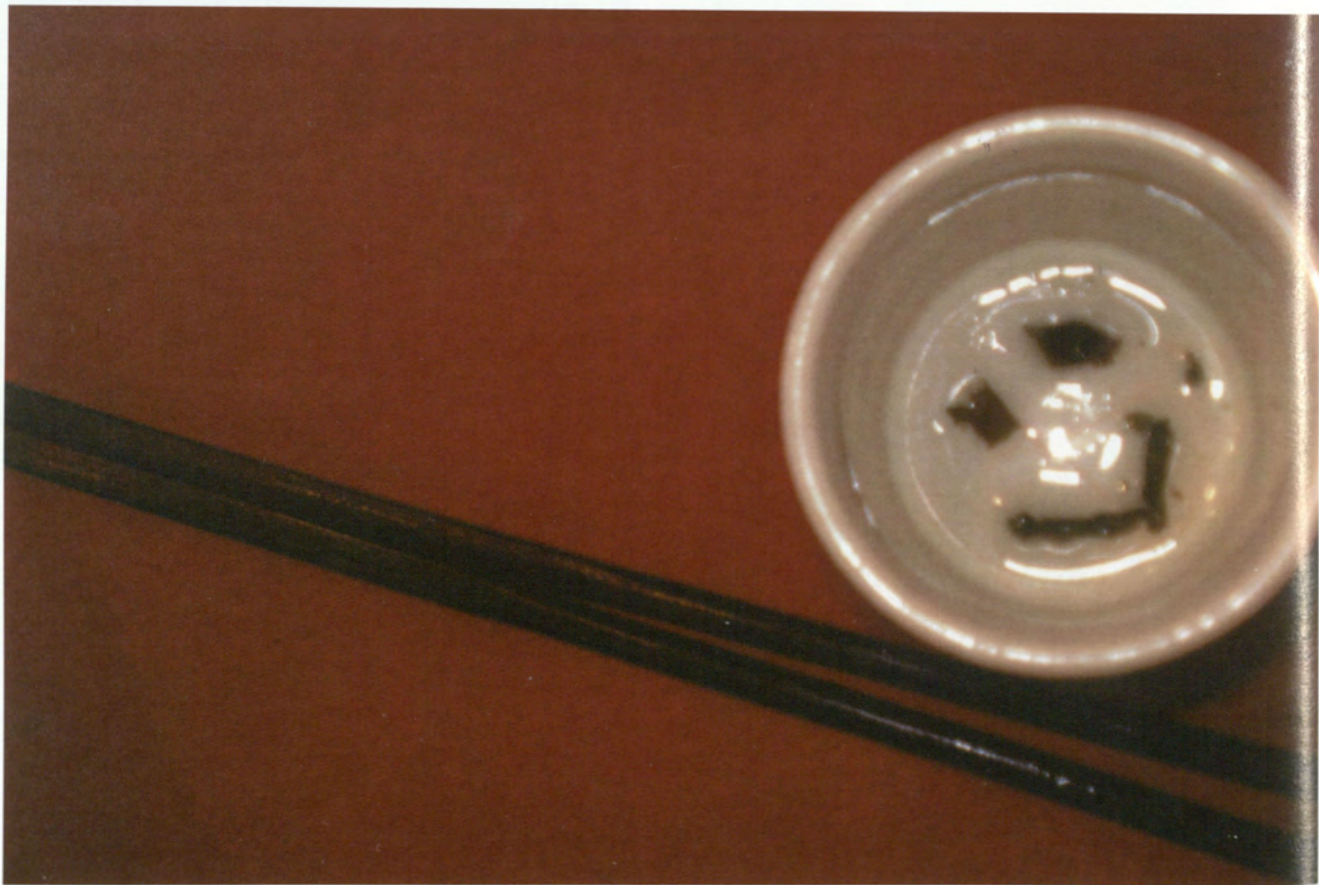
Onion | KIMBERLY SIENKIEWICZ

(fear)



(anger)

Fear/Anger | ABBY HOLLIS



My Green Tea Predicts a Bright Future | MEGAN LEE



My Starry Night | JUSTIN VINING



(untitled) | SABRINA MANGAN

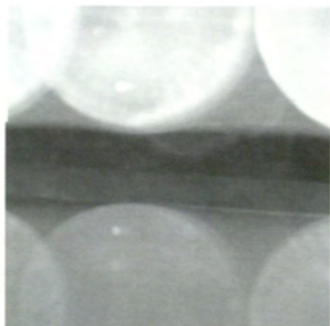
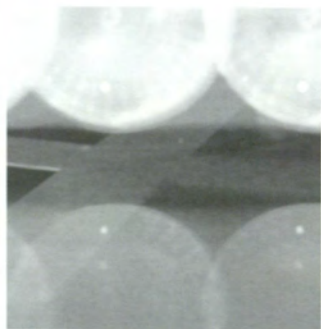


Searching | DAN LUND



Chillin' | YUKI D. GUZMAN





| poetry

NINA JOHNSON

DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU AXE

My poem pops out
like a chalky, bone egg.
With warmth and wobbly waiting,
the cracks expose no nightingale,
but a chicken.
Whether I paint the crooked beak,
or fluff at those pasty feathers,
I cradle a chicken.
It cocks, it chokes,
it stinks like a chicken
coop left unswept
for three searing summer days.

The farmer finally pats
my shoulder, reminds me
that chickens are not pets.
Reminds me to grip
the axe, just so,
to swing it high
above me, hacking
for the hickory block below.
Weighted by my assignment, I fell
the axe, a thud that pounds the ground.

Winking sweat and counting toes,
I search the ground, no chicken.
The farmer chuckles, grades me A
for effort, but a failure
for the execution.
I nod, agree, and turn
to find the chicken clucking,
bobbing on the farmer's head.
I drop the axe, professing
that surely, I have done something
if I've made a chicken fly.

TAMING

Pigtails, ponies, braids
neatly binding girlhood hair.
Pinned and twisted yet still bouncing,
the deed dressed-up with ribbons,
grandma's clips, and mother's bows.
Combs with tiny teeth
for short, fine hair and tangles.
Paddle brushes for those thick heads
of hair long with tenacity.
Whether tender or tugging,
the chore brought tears or sore scalps,
sending some for the shears hoping
for less distress, only to witness
proud and stubborn tufts popping
off at the forehead.

You leave the house bounding,
wind wrestling loose the natural fall
of things, feet shuffling free
the static charge of fly-aways,
your head a fluffy dandelion seed.

But a friend or a mirror, a lover

or the nearly imperceptible pressure
of a sinuous stray across your cheek points out
that wearing such emancipated locks
is wholly unbecoming.

So you press down,
spraying, shaping, cutting,
shrugging hair from shoulders
convinced you've saved yourself
some troubles. Only to find,
when dry dandelions wave,
that you cannot decide
between running through them, kicking
away at their weightless parachutes,
or blowing tender farewell kisses, wishing

DARING THE DINGOS

Inspired by Richard Garcia's "Chickens Everywhere"

Don't dare the dingos. Dingos scratch and fetch the Pharoah's final plague. Spinning in the park, don't turn your back. Those are panting dingos in Mister Rogers' slip-on shoes and sweaters.

Do all you can not to dare them. You drive a Volvo, slowly. You sing 'click it or ticket' fastening seatbelts. Behind Hummer wheels, dingos run reds.

You are home hunting dingos. One dusty dingo gnaws Barbie like a bone. Dingos make pups beneath the kitchen sink. You corner them. Animal control applauds your sweating brow. You find dog hairs in your own brush.

You greet your nanny. She's wearing a dog tag. She wags her tail and sniffs. You slam the door and quit your job. Tick-tock double-lock, there really is no place like home. Each day lurks like a dingo with ravenous fangs and rank dog breath. And you, baby, dare to be made of flesh and bone.

JOHN LINSTROM

IN LIMBO

Inspired by Kim Addonizio

He can feel the night's darkness, and the rips
of lightning only madden him further, reveal
nothing in their teases, force him to wait
for the right moment, for just the right

Flash—and like a parody of old
Lutheran paradox, in that light
he sees nothing; and so
strains to stretch, to wrench

himself open enough to suck in
the Nothing at once—knuckles dig
into the eye sockets of his skull,
scrape out dirt and electrify dry

bone. Being awake now,
he can remember and see
the path as the couple
pass. Their mittened hands

make love with the secrets
of affection, until they approach
his grave. Woolen hands are promptly

pocketed as the pair stare

the dead in the face, shift mood
into quietude and shift weight
with the hips, but the blindness lives
in them now. The unseen specter

returns their gaze as a mother would
to her children. Well, come now;
there's no need for that, no need...

Lacking response, he repents from this
scene and walks off through colored
leaves, alone, but lightly as a dream,
and fades.

ELLEN ORNER

{PAHT-LEH-JHAN}

extra virgin olive oil
 garlic, lemon juice
 steaming, slimy, broiled eggplant
 its blackened skin burns yours
 as you peel it from its flesh.
 scrape the long purplish strips
 with a red-handled knife.
 10 min. for each side.
 tablespoon of pepper, tablespoon of salt.
 it fits in the palm of your hand.
 the indentation that happens when
 you cup your hand, fingers
 stretched out straight.
 PapaCarl's pinky always
 sticks out straighter.
 he cut the tendon a long time ago
 fixing electrical wires
 for the Air Force.
 i have to fill my palm
 a little more
 since its smaller.
 PapaCarl scrapes the eggplant
 better, he's had lots of practice.

he breathes heavily
 from emphysema.
 we run the blender,
 and in between the whirling
 i hear his sound:
 phoh-phoh-phoh
 he's struggling to get the air
 out of his
 stiffened lungs,
 but it sounds like he's laughing,
 a little like santa claus would,
 but much better.
 sometimes we laugh for real,
 like when one of us
 lets the spatula down too far
 and the blender gobbles it up.
 aunt germaine got a piece
 of spatula, one time.
 she said, "there's something
 in here with a very
 strange texture."
 they all get a taste:
 whoever's loitering in the kitchen.

there's always someone.
usually grandmama,
in her nightgown till 6pm
tasting and criticizing
and scolding in Turkish
or elaborating in French
or cursing in Greek.
but she always tells PapaCarl
it tastes good.
and it does.

EMERALD DAVIS

SWIMMING IN PINE RIVER

There's crud in my hair,
grit ingrained in my nails.
Three days without indoor
plumbing in this patch
of Michigan backwoods.

The icy water clenches
me with frigid fists.
Plunging in staggered
increments: toes, ankles,
thighs, torso, neck.

Once I'm numbed to the sting,
I emerge, then plummet off the edge
of the bridge. Insanity
is contagious when friends jump
first on this foray into the outside.

Our plastic raft rubs
the rock-strewn riverbed,
sagging under our combined
weight. We bump and zig-zag
through the shifting current.

I attempt to paddle around
the trees that thrust fingertips
above the waterline, those silent
sentinels to submerged bodies
decaying under our enjoyment.

Frost-filled droplets pelt
my sunned skin and spiders
drop down to greet us. Tumbling
onto shore, we trek back
towards tent land.

Ferns spruce the forest floor.
The pine needles underfoot
chat crunchily with their whooshing
relatives who have yet to fall. They cushion
my skid down the last gully.

Smoky warmth chases
away my goose bumps.
The hot dogs sizzle and burn
our esophagi on the way down,
and the Pine River laughs behind us.

PICKING UP ACORNS

My grandpa's cabin sits
snuggly in his little corner
of Indiana woods; like an old,
well-worn shoe that never
fails its foot.

Its innards smell of sleeping
bags, bunk beds, and stained
timber. The potbelly stove
warms the coffee and water
for hot chocolate.

Outside, the oaks are king
of their treely court, towering
over their lesser cousins. Even
so, they never forget that Grandpa
spared them from death as farmland.

Every fall they send an offering
of acorns to my grandpa. Heaps
of their funny brown nuts with
little French hats drop down
around his wooden home.

The Hickories volunteer
their large, lumpy seeds
as well, and the pines
proffer their cones, but Pappa
likes the acorns best.

He faithfully collects the gift
of his oaks and takes them back
to town, transforming his present
into sculptures of nature's beauty
out in his porch workshop.

Pappa's acorn artistry lines
the mantelpiece and dots
shelves all over our houses,
a constant token of friendship
and promise of next year.

JENNIFER YAROS

REACHING

I won't answer to Rebecca,
so my father huffs Mary
and carves an existence inside
of me like a worm
rots the flesh of an apple.

Not God the father,
God my father,
and he says I feel
like the Sabbath,
like sweet, sweet Sunday

and searches for the wound,
fingers sharp
enough to pierce my side.
Though I can't be Jesus
because he wants Christ inside—

lusts to see his face in my son
like we long to see God in Jesus,
like I yearn to taste God
in the wafer-size slide
that I stole from art class.

My mind projects,
saturates a ceiling
with the stories and disproportion,
and I see the finger reaching—
reaching to another

as if he doesn't notice that life
chokes, grips too tight.
That the baby breathes
too deep, like night.
I can't even bear Michelangelo whisper.

TOM HEET

CHRISTMAS

safe in their cellophane,
in their america
candies suspend on a douglas fir

safe in snow and cocoa
our logic suspends on harmless sugars
and virgin birth, meanwhile

fishermen shop the walmarts
for something cheap to hook the pine gills
of the bejeweled evergreen

our relatives come bearing wet tongues
to lick those spiral seams
claret, then cream
claret, then cream

BABYLON

not a widow
among us queens enthroned
our demulcent reign
garnished with grapes and verse
averse to pain

but our linen, our pearls
our women, our girls
are gone
today, a singular hour
stole them away

demons and crows
burn our homes, tear our clothes
nothing now remains

standing in the wreck
of my decadence,
no, of my innocence
i feign to feel
while the march of my youth slows to a wandering age

ASH AND TANGERINE

Inspired by Hadley Hooper's illustration accompanying
a story by T.C. Boyle in Harper's magazine

in the garden
at dawn
at the iron gate
the shape of a beast painted
ash and tangerine
blood candy apple red
tongue with ivory
teeth – composed,
steady bearing

the gathering light
throws pine and shale on the cold aurora
the citrus beast
rests on orchids covered
in wet and smoke
with the majesty of midnight suns
he lies
quiet as the iris, quiet as the vine
strange as jesus
healing the sick and blind

calling, i ride to him
on the backs
of equine, of dromedary women

HANNAH SMITH

GIRL TALK

We sat kitty corner at a table with no edges
and you told me about the reasons:
because our auras are color clashed

and conversation malty in the mouth,
you said, because I have a new found
feminist independence,

because he is probably making out with her
right now, smashing his knees deep into pink
bed sheets on that twin bed, and Marilyn Monroe

is watching from behind glass, and pushing
the front of her dress down between her thighs
with such little true effort, all the time applauding

them to go farther faster firmer wetter.
Because of Marilyn, you said, that wasp
of a woman.

FOR TOM AND ALL OTHER SYMPATHETIC SOULS

Sometimes a person will hand you a fish tied up in a bag
and you will have to try to keep this goldfish alive
and you will dump it into a punch bowl
and you will tell it to swim.

You rush in, decorated in plastic
bags, hiding more plastic teeth

shaped like a toaster. The smell of industry
ablaze calls me out from retreat.

You have to let it run once to protect
against harmful chemicals.

Just put the toast in.

Do you really want your toast smelling like that?

Well, now the kitchen smells rank!

How did people with aged appliances

coax them into normality
in the beginning?

Last week:

You threw away my enchilada sauce
because you read once that letting substances stew
in aluminum cans is toxic.

I think: no more enchiladas this week.

I don't even know if that's true though, you admit,
but you can't really trust
anything these days.

The sponges are unsanitary; the sauces are filled with sprouting
toxins;

the toaster is burning sour into the house; a can of beans
extended pale unfamiliar lobes, and it wasn't pork fat.

Later:

The fins grew dark edges, whether from dank water or
unhealthy innards

I don't know. All the same, guilt crept in like a bad
banana, ripening into a mushy translucent paste that sits and
reeks

to the point of sudden decisions, and I said, I am going to buy
a new tank

tonight, and you asked to come with, taking in my ritualistic
impulses, not laughing.

You had diagnosed lack of air circulation, noting the stagnant
dearth of bubbles or current. I thought maybe it was just that
punch
bowls aren't generally made for housing fish.

Maybe it's his time, you suggested, instead of spending
twenty or even thirty dollars,
but I chose the kit, complete with aqua safe and net.

At home, I prepare the tank, washing
everything, cleansing. Should I wait until morning?
No. Do it now.

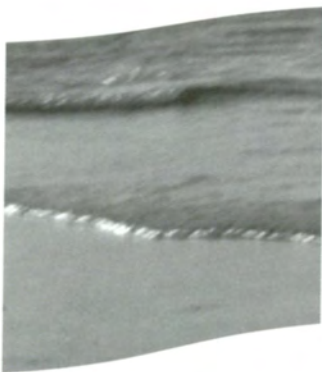
For a moment I thought he would die mid-air, sprawled

between two existences.

And as I dangled him between tanks, slowly,
he choked and then plunged
into 20 dollars and 54 cents.

This fish is going to live, you proclaimed, with the same
absolute
assurance that my father gave me as a child,
when he said
you will not have bad dreams tonight,
you are good at math,
I love your mother.





| art



(untitled) | CAROLYN STYPKA



Gangster's Paradise | MEGAN LEE

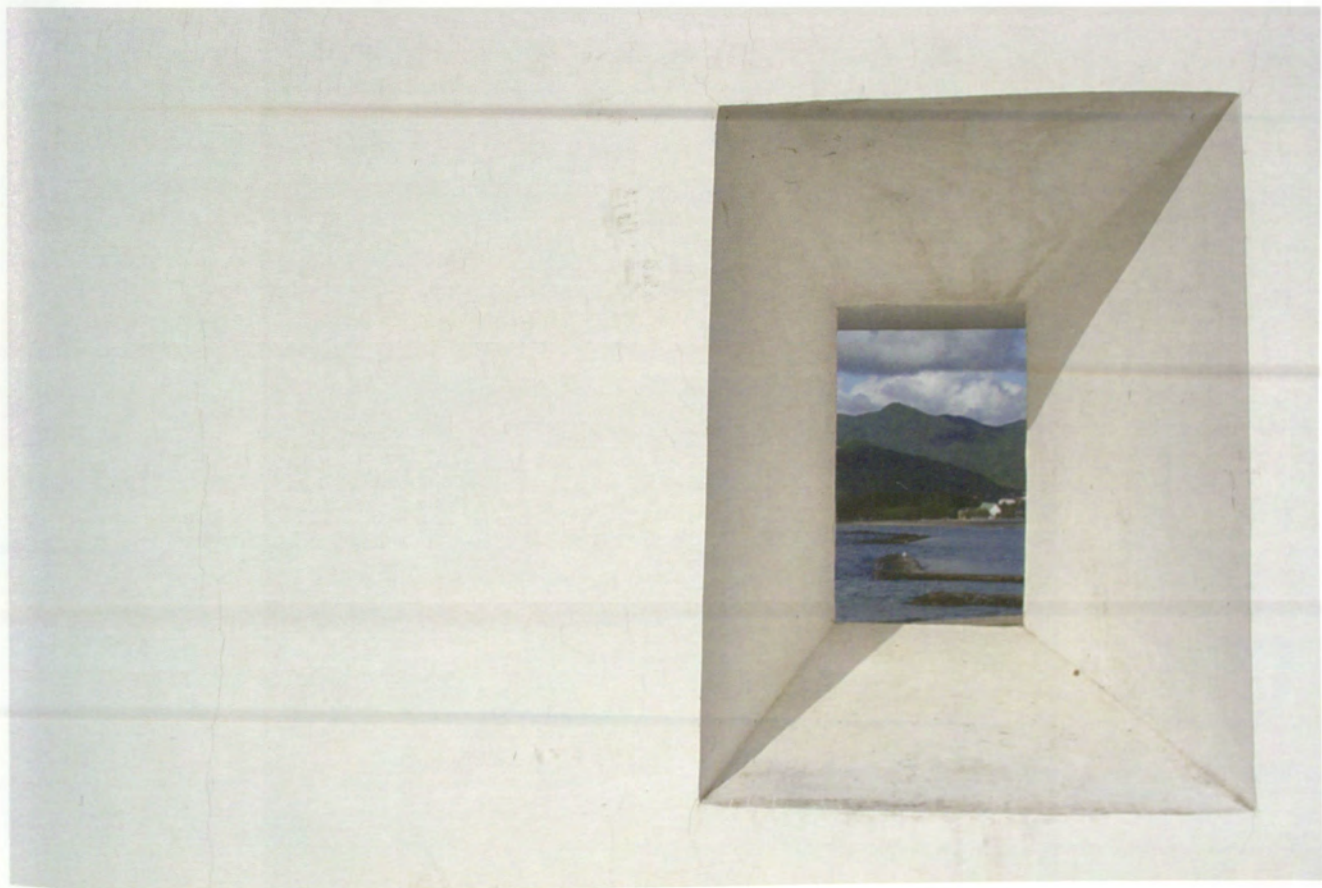


The World I See | JUSTIN VINSON
right: detail





Window and Bricks | JAMES STRASBURG



The Battlefield | YUKI D. GUZMAN



Sorolla Museum, Madrid, Spain | CATTILIN KERR



(untitled) | KATHERINE COWAN



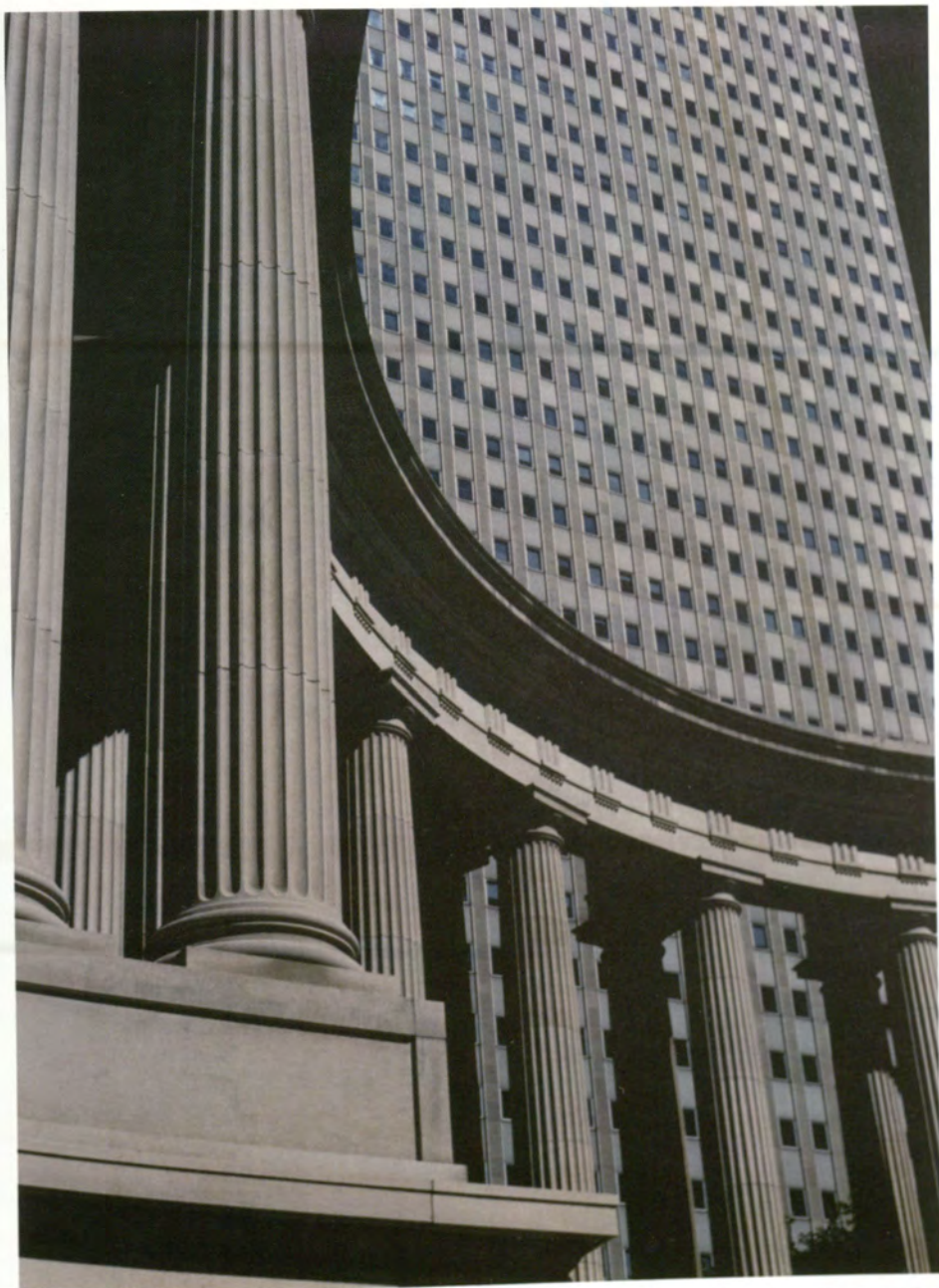
(untitled) | BRET HASSLER



(untitled) | JEFFREY R. SOLOMON



(untitled) | CHRIS LENTZ



Old Meets New | AMANDA GARTMAN



Radishes | KIMBERLY SIENKIEWICZ





| prose

THE MOMENT

JENNIFER YAROS

...she always had the feeling
that it was very, very dangerous
to live even one day.
—Virginia Woolf
Mrs. Dalloway

I couldn't help it, wouldn't help it. I needed one more moment of bliss.

Hesitating at the guest-bedroom door of my parents' vacation cottage, I stood petrified like the chameleonic wood floating along the sandy Lake Michigan shore, careful not to incite the slightest swish of my tulle-rich, fairytale dress. As guests arrived downstairs, my head peeked into the room, and I glimpsed Richard sitting at the vanity. His deeply lined palms rested on the glass tabletop, buried the etchings of many lives as if preserved in stone, and he watched himself in the mirror, his watery eyes both casting and refusing reflection. Twice his hands jerked, and I expected to hear sharp scraping instead of the slight jingle caused by a loose, lamp light bulb.

Perhaps his expression might have scared other brides, but I knew his uncertainty wasn't about the marriage. Richard's wedding day wasn't about exchanged vows or rings; Richard's wedding day was about his choice to take the next step in life. His version of cold feet stemmed from his fear to accept the very ball-and-chain weighing his existence—which had nothing to do

with whom he chose to be his wife. I admit that some part of me wished for an unexpected burst of laughter, for an unexpected embrace of his own soul; but I let him be, understanding that vitality is in limited supply for some of us.

Besides, I agreed to support whatever decision he made because how many girls could say that their first love, their childhood sweetheart, proposed on a stormy, impetuous autumn night? How many girls could say that their bodies were gripped so tight that smudged, slate fingerprints lingered along with the euphoria the next day? He was everything like he used to be, even though he left so many pieces in the desert. Richard wanted to fight in the war. He didn't care if he drowned in rain or sand. He didn't care how many he had to kill in order to be killed. Richard only cared that he was given a proper chance to die. He couldn't ever really explain it to me, but he felt the weight, the memories, of living more than just one life—without one real death.

His mother confided to me once that she thought I would help. She raised my chin with a pointed, red-tipped index finger and asked, "Who can resist this contagious smile?"

I wanted to correct her. Don't you mean compulsive smile? Richard recognized my ambivalence, though, and knew that death loomed as an elusive option for me just like life. Being with Richard didn't sway my feelings either way but did force me to rid myself of any other man. But, sometimes Richard

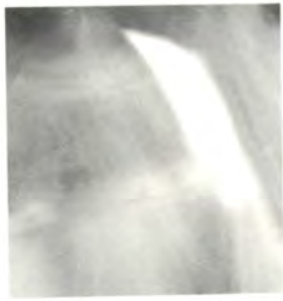
reminded me of every other man—and my father. Still, I kept smiling so that people wouldn't suspect what went on inside of my pretty head.

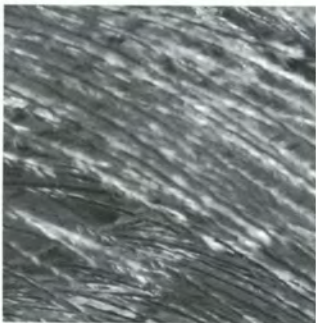
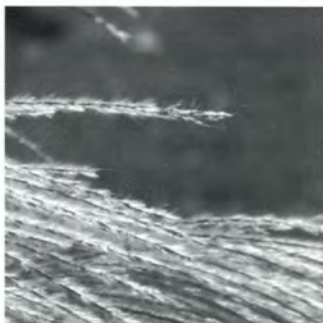
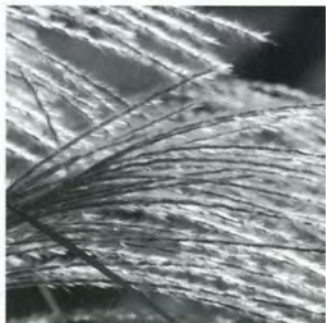
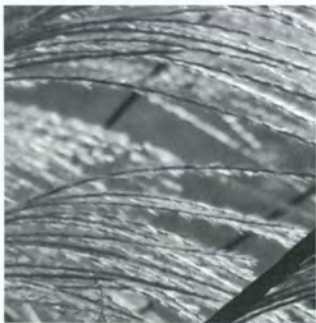
Right then, my pretty head wanted the moment—wanted the very moment again and again because I could finally see the beauty of Richard's life while it hung in limbo. It made me think that I might be able to explain it to him in a way that he understood.

Richard's face looked into his lap, and his hands dropped to his thighs. I heard a metallic click and thought of hard candy rattling in a tin. His face rose, and he once again peered into the vacant mirror.

Though he didn't recognize anything, I saw his grey-diamond eyes, his inky black hair, and the olive, velvet skin that I could never seem to stop touching. I watched his empty gaze and wondered if I should break the spell. All that I could think, though, was: What about what he wants?

The weathered, wooden handle appeared heavy even from my distance, and the burden distracted me from the rising, telltale silver. The ear-piercing blast woke me in time to retreat, to jerk my head from the doorway, to yank my dress from the path of his bloody mist. As a straggly crowd galloped up the stairs like mustangs and my heart beat indentations into my chest, I felt certain that I would always remember the moment as something we both wanted.





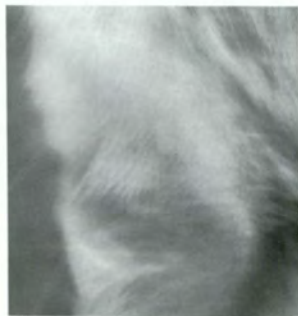
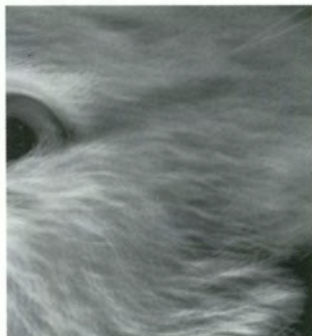
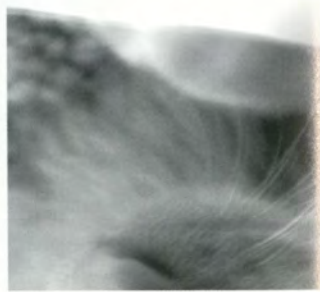
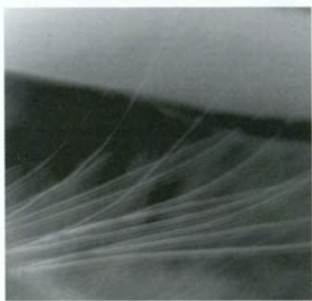
WALKING

ELLEN ORNER

Construction zones are always interesting. Especially when you're on a college campus and there's nothing more exciting happening than your walk to class. It's the same route every day. Out of Lank's south side door, down three steps, right at the railing. You can take the street or the sidewalk, or cross through the grass. Depends on your footwear. Thanks to the construction, occasionally there's a slightly new detour to be taken. One of the best was the set of swinging gates at the beginning of the sidewalk—two of them, standing solo, in the snow. The first time you see them, you pause and consider and feel like you're in a Warner Brothers cartoon. You turn your head around, looking for an answer. You make eye contact with a construction worker. He shrugs his shoulders, palms facing the sky. But after you've walked through the gates a few times, the novelty wears off. It's just part of the route. Inside the fences, though, where you can't walk—that's where the excitement is. Because the lack of grass is greener on the other side of green fence, maybe. Caterpillars, earthmovers, cranes, drills, big red totem poles. Temples for dwarves or altars for giants—massive concrete slabs laid on rusted iron columns. Piles of riddled cement are the ruins of ancient menhirs, left by druids and dug up by Reith Riley. Alright alright, druids have nothing to do with it. But you do get the impression, as stacks of colossal pipes stare back at you while you walk, that a new Stonehenge is happening.

I walked through the gates one 8:55 a.m. to see about 20

construction workers standing in a circle, doing early morning calisthenics. They were wearing their yellow hardhats and reflecting jackets as they bent over to touch their steel-toed boots. Then they put their cigarettes between their teeth held out their arms and swung them in little circles, ten seconds forward, ten seconds backward. They breathed deeply, blowing out steam in the freezing air. Fog lurked behind them, rising from the Ditch. I had stopped to watch them, of course. One doesn't see the builders of Stonehenge limbering up everyday. The cult leader, with steely gray hair and harsh stubble, smiled back at my amazed face as he picked up his carafe and climbed in his forklift.



ANOMALOUS MIDWEST ENCOUNTERS: ALONE -TIME

EVAN SCOTT BRYSON

THE CAFES AND THE CARNIVORES

Franklin goes to Lincolnway. Then there is Jefferson Street, Monroe, Washington, then Lafayette; a Memorial, and a Century, I think. Just in case the national history is forgotten, at least roads will have something to say of dead presidents and their conquests.

But things were cold and a little wet. Rice burners and farmers' trucks conversed side-by-side in the thin streets, their bodies reflected among the windows of the European-style cafes and bistros set back on wide sidewalks. The air was stagnant with the smell of dead winter and exhaust fumes. Spring was trying her damndest, and on the lawn of the fortress-like courthouse, daffodils and tulips were making their way into the warming light.

And—there is always that discreet possibility of encountering the gaze of someone sipping in a coffee shop—and holding that gaze. And in that gaze imagining the sex these perfect strangers could have over and over, utterly changing their lives, climaxing in shrieks of glass-shattering frequencies. That is, making noise enough to break all that smoky caramely dreamy glass between the interior and exterior conspirators.

I'm uncertain, absolutely, why the pet shop doesn't stock kittens. Fish and fish and more fish; tiger striped (mewling, finny), tank-cleaning (poop-eating), and lonesome (lonesome), blue tanks with blue backgrounds.

Ma'am, you guys have any kittens?
No, not here.

The shopworker shakes her head in vigorous suspicion as I write down our exchange in my Moleskin notebook.

THIS ISN'T PROOF, ANY

1:17 and the staff kitchenette's been ransacked again. Coffee, creamer, small insulated cups. After midnight the choices seem magnetized, unpurified ore waiting patiently for prospectors, crackling-wrapped in electric fields, and it's the caffeine—the caffeine that we're after.

7:22 in the morning. Newspaper has been coded onto a CD. I'm not in charge of that—I don't touch that. The Editor-in-Chief and Assistant Editor—that's their priority when it comes morning. They also drive to Home Mountain Publishing.

8:23 in the morning. I got invited along for the drive to Home Mountain Publishing. I plopped into the backseat. We decided not to scrape the windows, so we waited in our breath-steam for the defrost to get hot enough. We gave up and Colin just drove. Turned right on Lincoln, rising sun refracted across the paw-prints of ice all over the windshield, blinding us.

The body gets so heavy without sleep, feels like my arms will slip off—want to slip off. When you drive in a twenty-four hour interval of sleep deprivation, researchers (always researchers or scientists, yeah?) well, researchers say you are basically driving drunk. Driving worse than drunk. If Colin fishtails through the snow-blind into a cement culvert, or falls asleep at the wheel into the sneering face of a semi, three members of the editorial board are just smeared meat on the highway.

9:30 in the morning, last weekend. It was me and four girls, good friends, on our way to buy art supplies from the Firme brothers, out near Michigan City. Heat was up too high, my face looked skinny, Sarah said I looked handsome. Lauren told us the nightmare scenario: what if she crashed the car? Five students from the art department reduced to bleeding sludge. We hadn't even started the studio class, wouldn't have any paintings for legacies.

8:45 at night with Matt and Holly, our freshman year. Some joker crashed into Matt's red Honda at an intersection a week back, so we're cruising around in Race Suzuki, a pristine white rental car. Wanna tear her up, says Matt. He had quit smoking then, just drank every night, chewed on cigars. The eczema on his hands always kept his fingers light on the steering wheel. A month prior we'd been to Lake Michigan, thinking the ice-flows had shored up. But the winter was too mild so the ice had gone before we got there. He'd wanted to wander out on the ice, risk the crevasse. Now he wanted to tear up Race Suzuki.

9:08—too early in the morning. Feels like smears. How do my fingers type at all, gripped tight as they are to the steering wheel? And open—palms spread like jam under the sun, fingernails macadamized, and a grin—a shit-eating grin, glad and fastened behind the safety buckle. Inertia replaced by deadlines, low batteries, blood red eyes, in the office. In the din of failed car accidents.

THE CAT AND HER SPACES

Seems silly. Long bouts of not having a cat—probably since I was in Elementary School is the last time I really owned one or had one to feed. At the apartment lives Cosette, who is fat and depressed and gets excited only when she can eat. She coughs up enormous, publicly torrid hairballs and has fine dandruff that sticks under my fingernails if I scratch her back too long. I jokingly obliged her, Be My Valentine? but I fazed the joke out a week before the Fourteenth because I was broke. And really,

what can a filthy cat give back?

I read cats can't sublimate pleasure. After a few minutes of feeling well-kept with strokes and comfort, they get confused and start hissing. Even a purring cat will eventually forget it was having a high time, unless it falls asleep. This threshold probably has a name and can be teased into a broader application.

Cosette's apartment sometimes has parties. I attended a masquerade there last Friday. Felt like a real animal, with a crow mask so huge it hurt the bridge of my nose and blighted my right eye's sight.

Oh my God, that's fantastic! Can you see in that thing?

No.

Reaching for salsa and chips was a chore, I had no depth perception for the night. Accidentally elbowed couples standing in doorways, waved at strangers, eventually collapsed on a chair in the living room and stared beakishly at unknowners, still feeling peckish, too proud to waver the mask. I sipped on RedBull to give me wings.

Cosette hid in Tracy's room under the bed. I knew exactly where she was, where she always is, and surprised myself by not creeping down to her to scare her whiskers off.

What a terrific inversion. An animal frightened by humans dressed like animals, and hiding under the bed. When I was younger, I mentally topated where I would hide if burglars entered my home in the night. Emphatically! Only under the bed! Behind boxes of old seashells and used-up calendars and bundles of birthday cards. Old shoes. Tender dust bunnies!

Cosette?

...

I'm sorry you're so ascarded. Caw, caw.

...

Aren't you going to ask what I am?

...

I'm a crow-clock. An angel of death.

LONG STRETCH OF NIGHT

*March with compass
between being and becoming
—Milan Kundera
The Invention of Solitude*

I will not start from the beginning. That is when I was three or four, and was taken in the night to have tubes put in my ears. My appendix was on the verge of rupture on a bus ride back from my seventh grade class trip to Washington, D.C. I didn't

tell anyone. The bus was so quiet, and creeping so peacefully through the Pennsylvania night, that to complain about my dying body would have been a merciless infraction against the dark glowing rest. Later, when my appendix was removed, my mother or my brothers drove me around on long, song-filled county drives, to keep my mind occupied and rumble me to sleep.

I went out to Kingsbury in an April a while ago with Matt and Holly. I was in the sublime state of healing that any other night-drive does to me. ('The car is dark, we hear lost voices, the dials glow, and simultaneously we are moving and not moving,' notes John Hawkes of this sensation.) Matt's rental car, Race Suzuki, was riding low and crooked—the wheelwells were busted two nights ago, when he took us and his bestfriend Cody to fishtail out on rain-slicked backroads. We went into a farmer's hatch, took a wagon trail through a windshear and half the car slid into a ditch. We got out and pushed Suzi back onto grit. She took off and Matt laughed mawkishly as he peeled away, leaving his friends in the cold mud.

Kingsbury was a spook story he never told us about. An abandoned military installation, the only reason for a town to be there at all, had been peeled back after the Korean War, and all the implements for making mortars and shells had been hauled out of the still-standing buildings. The fortifications, the outposts, the messhalls, the recreation buildings all haggard and rain-rotted, like swamp-submerged skulls. The road into the complex was so over-grown with bramble and briar we drove past it twice, never angling our headlights onto its low-brush demarcation, finally tumbling onto the road blindly where Matt intuited. We lost a chunk of the front-bumper as Suzi nose-dived into a massive pothole.

And there's this song—'For Real,' by Okkervil River—and I sang the only line I could remember under my breath: 'If you really want to see what really matters most to me, let's take a real short drive.' The night was keeping its kids and its monsters and the two were indissoluble in this moment.

Hegel, Marx, Freud—if I'd read anything on them then, I could have prostituted their ideas for my own safety. But in this trespassing zone of rural exploration, I only felt the gloom and majesty any abandoned endeavor allows. The phenomenon has been explored extensively, mainly in the idea of the 'uncanny,' the everyday turned unfamiliar, what Anthony Vidler describes as 'the stubborn resistance of nature to the assimilation of human attributes and its tragic propensity to inorganic isolation.'

When the drizzle let down, Matt and Holly and me got on top of Suzi. Matt said, Let's roof, so that's what we did. He had his leg in the driver's side window, steering the car as it trundled forward, gear in drive, and I had my legs hanging off the back. Holly bravely faced forward. We roofed through the debris,

stopping here and there to inspect empty lots, circles of dead trees, the resonating shimmer of an inky pond, and three gutted buildings.

STITCHES

My first year in Valparaiso, my friend asked me to escort her to her sorority's winter semi-formal. Even though she knew how much respect I had for our campus' Greek life, she thought I'd be a discerning date, someone that would keep his eye on her and other people, and report back with some integrity on the state of the human scenes at the little gala. Also, I wouldn't try to have sex with her at the end of the night, which, it seems, a lot of people get so anxious about.

The dance wasn't very fun. All the guys were too drunk to talk to and if they weren't drunk they acted drunk. The staff for Casa del Roma, the venue for this affair, must dread the clean-up after opening their doors for the kids in our university because all we do is puke in their bathrooms, in the stalls, in the urinals, and fill their wastebaskets up with shit when the toilets get taken over by people passed out.

It's an impressive space—faux-glamorous, faux-Italian—with columns and a balcony area, and a dark cherry hardwood dancing floor, then vine-trellises and cut-glass chandeliers. Jake Gatsby might cut-loose here. But it isn't a complete space. Usually, whoever is on the decorating committee for these events, they string up white Christmas lights and billowing swaths of maroon fabric, because nothing quite catches your eye in the big rooms. All atmosphere, no ambiance; all expectation, no catalyst. And there is never enough privacy. To have an intimate moment, a grope or two, or get in fight, you have to take it to the parking lot. (But no one ever takes it elsewhere: formals, inherently, formulate a preposterous stage for the melodrama of good manners and fake smiles riven down their centers, so the guts can pop out and coil around us all. I peed next to a Mercedes and smelled the steam.)

Dance halls must succeed only inasmuch as they can make their captives anxious. It's implacable, uncanny, that a bus full of sorority sisters and their fraternity boyfriends, once peaceful, once so diligent at compromise and placation, air their months-long grievances and secrets on the dance floor. Two years ago, it was the vague hostility of rival lovers blooming through amaretto sours. Then someone dropped their champagne flute on the dance floor and those girls who had relieved themselves of

the road into the complex was so over-grown with bramble and briar we drove past it twice.

too-tight pumps, they got glass in their feet.

Such insanity—what triviality, arcane abuse, we will do one another when a transient location (that is, where you will only stay for a few hours) is filled with desperate intentions. Last night, after promising myself to never attend these ridiculous farces, I was feeling a lot more apologetic about my criticisms. So I said yes.

And it ended in tears again. But this time, I was mostly outside, out of contact, lying down on a concrete re-creation of Greco-Roman ruins, very exhausted from dancing and pining, but thrilled to be living through the drama of the night—a lesbian couples' outing; at least three people escorted back to campus, too drunk to talk; and a beserk ping-ponging of betrayals, accumulating then leap-frogging from one body to the next.

Hey—hey guy lying on the concrete....?

What.

Hey—are you okay?

Perfect.

Yeah you are, guy-lying-on-the-concrete. You wanna smoke?

No.

Your date ditch you?

No.

You drink too much?

Could you ever?

Ha, that's right man, that's right.

I'm just looking at the stars. Trying to stay outta trouble.

I hear ya, man, I hear ya.

Nice and cool out here.

Yeah, man, it's a real nice night.

Yeah. I guess it really is.



THESE REMNANTS OF CHILDHOOD: SOOTHSAYING

VALERIE COCHRAN

Fingernails clinging to fingers and one thumb, blossoming from a palm attached to a wrist. Hands holding and sculpting and dancing and loving. Beckon someone forward. Hold someone back. Our lives were built on hands. Fingers and wrists and palms. Bricks made by hands piled upon each other by more hands and applauded by more and more hands. Hands carry us into the world and throw us out. Fingers around our necks, the handle of a gun or knife or wooden spoon. Hands can speak: words and sentences and proper nouns and all without the use of lips, teeth or a tongue. They can snap and clap and tap and even pat in their own languages. Hands shake when scared. Tremble when angry. Shiver when cold. How could they lie?

Look at your palm. Go ahead. Do it. Unclench your fist; unravel your fingers from the drink you are holding. Just look at your palm. Look at the creases and lines, how deep or shallow they are. Follow the line that starts between your first and second fingers to where it seems to slide off the side of your hand. Find triangles and stars and criss-crossed lines. Think of what sort of things your head, heart and hands have gone through to receive these lines. You might be a skeptic, but you can't deny that those lines sure are fascinating. They swell and shorten and attach themselves to other lines. Sometimes they disappear.

I don't really know what got me into palm reading. It seems silly to think of a young girl obsessing over it. I think of it as something so adult now. Something that shouldn't be taken

lightly or played around with. I catch myself always trying to peek at people palms, the shapes of their fingernails, the way they clench their fists. It is all supposed to mean something. Like the arrangement of the stars on the day they were born. Or the placement of the letters in the spelling of their names. It's just one more thing to take into consideration, just a small part of the complicated game of figuring people out. Or maybe it's cheating.

Ladonna Sorensen, my father's mother, decided to get her palm read. I don't know where or why or the exact year, but it happened. It's impossible for me to know all of the details of this story because it occurred long before I was a twinkle in my parent's eyes. Before they were even a spark in each other's hearts. My grandma isn't the type to lie or use her imagination extensively. But she went to a palm reader and amongst the other trivial facts and figures they most likely spit out at her, she was given a date of a future car accident that was going to involve my father. As soon as she left, she ranted about what a load of bullshit it was to predict a date for a car accident. My grandpa, always the more imaginative one of the couple, took it for truth. And a short while later, when a phone call came of an accident involving my dad, he shook his head and said:

"Look at what date it is, Ladonna."

I am sure she shrieked and dropped the phone and maybe cried a little. Her eyes wide and glassy, she decided not to try to

foretell the future ever again. It didn't do anything for her nerves or her blood pressure.

More than a few years back, my mother got her palm read at a flea market. There were long aisles full of bad imitations of brand name trinkets. I skipped along from booth to booth, holding my dad's hand and pointing out all of the things he could buy me. He saw junk; I saw glorious toys that could occupy me for at least half an hour. My mom dragged along behind us with my continuously whining little brother. We approached a booth not like the others. A middle-aged woman sat at a little table with a half smile stamped on her face. She might have winked at me. And it is quite possible that I blushed and hid behind my dad's legs, still clutching his hand. There was something different about this woman. An odd knowledge, or maybe even wisdom, that shimmered around her dark skin. My mom stopped and nodded at my dad. He nodded back and walked with me over to a table near by with all the plastic Tupperware containers you could ever need. My sister lingered next to my mom as she sat down in a chair across from the old woman but after a moment, my mom waved her away, along with my brother, towards me and my dad.

I soon got bored with the mountains of plastic and annoyed with my siblings and started inching toward my mother. The look on her face was somehow hopeful and dismayed at the same time. The fortune-teller was stretching my mom's hand and flattening it. Spreading it across the table and tracing the lines with her own fingers. A few years later, when the things the woman said started coming true, my mother told me more of what the fortuneteller had whispered across the table. She had said she was from Minnesota (and outlined a large "M" in the middle of her palm, which I couldn't distinguish from the other lines), she was in the midst of a good and long-lasting marriage and a bit of adversity was in store for her within the next few years.

But the warnings didn't keep my mother from falling into the gossipy little traps that come with having sister-in-laws and she still ended up depressed and wallowing in a hopeless, cigarette smoke-filled mess. Knowing about what was to happen didn't help her anymore than watching a weather report can keep a tornado from inching closer.

My mother is small and delicate. She thinks she could always lose a few extra pounds. Her shoulders are narrow and her hips are round and I think of her as petite. Her eyes are watery and she hates the red that always seems to seep out of her hair every time she dyes it. Her childhood wasn't very nice. When I was little, she used to tell stories to me and my siblings about seeing Santa Claus in the sky outside her window and how her dad

worked in a hardware store and she used to wear her brother's sweaters to school. She didn't tell us then how her birthday was never celebrated; she was left at home to tend to her five siblings while her parents left town to gamble and drink and have the time of their lives. She definitely did not tell us about the time she made poms but couldn't stay on the team because her father refused to pick her up from school. She was cutting into his drinking time. Her family jumped from town to town attempting to escape her parents' debts. Living out of trailer homes and off of sloppy joes.

She doesn't tell many people any of that. It isn't the type of conversation that her new suburban friends want to hear over lunch. They want to talk about new cars and how well their youngest son did on his last report card. God forbid she bring up anything real; anything that might make these women shift uncomfortably in their seats. So she picks what to leave out in conversation. Tells them that she grew up in a large family in Minnesota and leaves it at that. But if those women could read palms, I mean really read palms, they could read between the shrugs of her shoulders and shifts of her eyes. Some lines fade but not the ones you carry around from the past.

For a solid block of three or four years after my mother got her palm read, I would wake up every weekday morning with my eyes burning. Smoke filled my bedroom and even with the door closed, every molecule of air was affected. My eyes were heavy and sore, my throat was tight. It hurt when I breathed. I would approach the living room with a dissatisfied scowl. And there my mother would be: puffing away on cigarette after cigarette and drinking coffee or a diet soft drink, staring at the TV as yet another soap opera flittered across the screen. I was disappointed and I made every extra effort to make that clear. Wearing my D.A.R.E. shirt, telling my mom how common cancer was. But she just kept smoking. And crying.

She hid it from my dad. She would smoke right after he left for work and stop long before he came home. She assumed he never knew because he never said anything. She sprayed air fresheners and cleaned out the ashtray and hid her cigarettes in a cabinet she didn't think he ventured into.

I threatened to tell dad but I never had to. The guilt finally got to her and she decided to tell him herself. They went out to a fancy dinner; it might have been their anniversary. She sat across the table and said that there was something she needed to tell him. I'm sure that he got flustered and his eyes got a bit wider.

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do it. unclench
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palm.

She told him she had taken up smoking. He relaxed and told her he thought she was going to tell him that she was having an affair. I'm sure they both laughed in a relieved sort of way.

My sister got her palm read on a pier in Cape Cod one summer for five dollars. My family and I stood out of hearing distance while it was going on. I was scared that they were going to tell her that she was about to die. She came out of it not believing a thing. She told us that it was all lies and none of it was going to come true. I asked her for specifics but all she would tell me is that the woman said she was going to become a teacher someday and my sister would rather die than teach. She isn't a teacher yet, but sometimes I remind her that it's still an option.

Even with the women in my family delving into palm reading, I didn't think much of it until my innocent little mind skipped across some books a few years later. I was soon hooked into the lines of patchwork maps covering everyone's palms. I couldn't get enough of it. I read gobs of books.

In the seventh grade, I went to Sarah Dubenic's birthday party and I brought all of my books about palm reading. I stayed up half the night with my flashlight telling people how kind their palm's said they were, how likely they were to fall in love. Nothing they didn't already know themselves.

But the books didn't tell me everything. I couldn't stop staring at my own palms wondering what I was missing. The books never told me why it looks like I have criss-crossed stars under three of my fingers. Why my fate line, the line running down the center of your palm, usually below your middle finger, is so choppy on one hand but loopy and winding on the other.

I've never gotten my palm read. I am always scared they are going to tell me I'm going to die or that I will end up lost and alone and full of hatred. I just want to know what I should be doing. I want someone to tell me when to give up hope and when to hold out for something really great. But maybe the lines on your palm don't really say any of that. Maybe those wrinkly old women reading palms can just hear it in your voice; see it in the droop of your shoulders.

I met a boy with almond-shaped fingernails and fingertips that tapered at the ends. It was supposed to mean that he was romantic and tender. Maybe I put too much effort into believing that was true. Giving him extra chances when I shouldn't have even glanced at his elegant palms in the first place. He stomped on my heart (figuratively of course) and I haven't really read many palm reading books since. I still think about it sometimes and steal glimpses at people's hands, but it hardly goes beyond that. I am not one to hold someone's palm flat and breathe heavily over it, telling them how deep their heart line is and how that

means they are a little too passionate for the standards of today's society.

Our hands don't lie, people do. They wither and fall off of their lofty pedestals and sometimes they disappear.



CONTRIBUTORS NOTES

Evan Scott Bryson, among other fictions, concerns himself with place theory and its effect on the body. The apartment at the bottom of the hill has provided a particularly good place for more theories to emerge and bodies to proof them. He wishes to thank the editors at *The Torch*, the ladies from last year, and, per usual, the boys and girls of Union County fame. He also thanks his family for enduring infrequent phone calls. Having a ghost for a son/brother must be difficult, but how lovingly they bear him.

Valerie Cochran proclaims of her work:

This was for those of us who read our horoscopes everyday,
 for the ladies and gents (that I love) who taught me when to say no,
 for the boys who are always at the spine of every goddamn thing that I write,
 and for the woman who read my palm at the Porter County Fair this past summer.
 You were right about everything.

When **Emerald Davis** sat down to write "Picking up Acorns" and "Swimming in Pine River," she knew that she wanted to write about the outdoors. Although she's lived in the inner city all her life, she's enamored with being outside. She was inspired by the first chapter of Emerson's essay on Nature and struck by his phrase, "In the woods is perpetual youth." Thus, she decided to poeticize one scene from a camping trip she took this summer with her family and friends and another scene of her grandpa and his cabin in the woods as a contrast between youth and age, in relationship to nature. Emerson also wrote that "Nature always wears the colors of the spirit," and she hopes that she brought this to life in her poems.

Tom Heet is a MALS graduate student. He is inspired by stars and trees.

Abbey Houx is very pleased to have her work, "Fear/Anger," presented in *The Lighter*. She wishes to thank all who have participated in the creation of this issue, as they are giving the featured artists a voice that might otherwise go unheard. The arts surround us all and the emotions created by them are long lasting.
 She is a freshman graphic design major here at VU. She grew up in Dyer, Indiana and studied under the talented and inspirational

art staff at Lake Central High School. She would like to take the time to thank them, as well as her ever-supportive family for their love and time. Lastly, she thanks you, reader of the Lighter, and as a wise man from Liverpool once said: "We all shine on."
 Art reigns.

Megan Lee is a sophomore. Her growing passion in photography has been influenced by travels around the United States and around the world. She believes that pictures can truly capture a moment and that a camera has a way of making anything look like a thing of beauty. She has never taken any classes pertaining to photography but really enjoys exploring the world with only her camera by her side. She hopes to continue this hobby in the future and is very excited about her work making its debut in *The Lighter*.

John Linstrom's poem "In Limbo" offers a reflection on life and death and which is which if either is. It may also be about forgiving people when they're sorry, like the author hopes your momma taught you, child. Being a college sophomore interested in literature, the arts, creation, and the humanities generally, John currently knows not what to do with his life and would rather not comment on his major at the moment. He would encourage his readers to contemplate the music of Gabriel-era Genesis (and tell him if you do), go on star-gazing bike rides (carefully), and spend some quality time thinking, speaking, and listening.

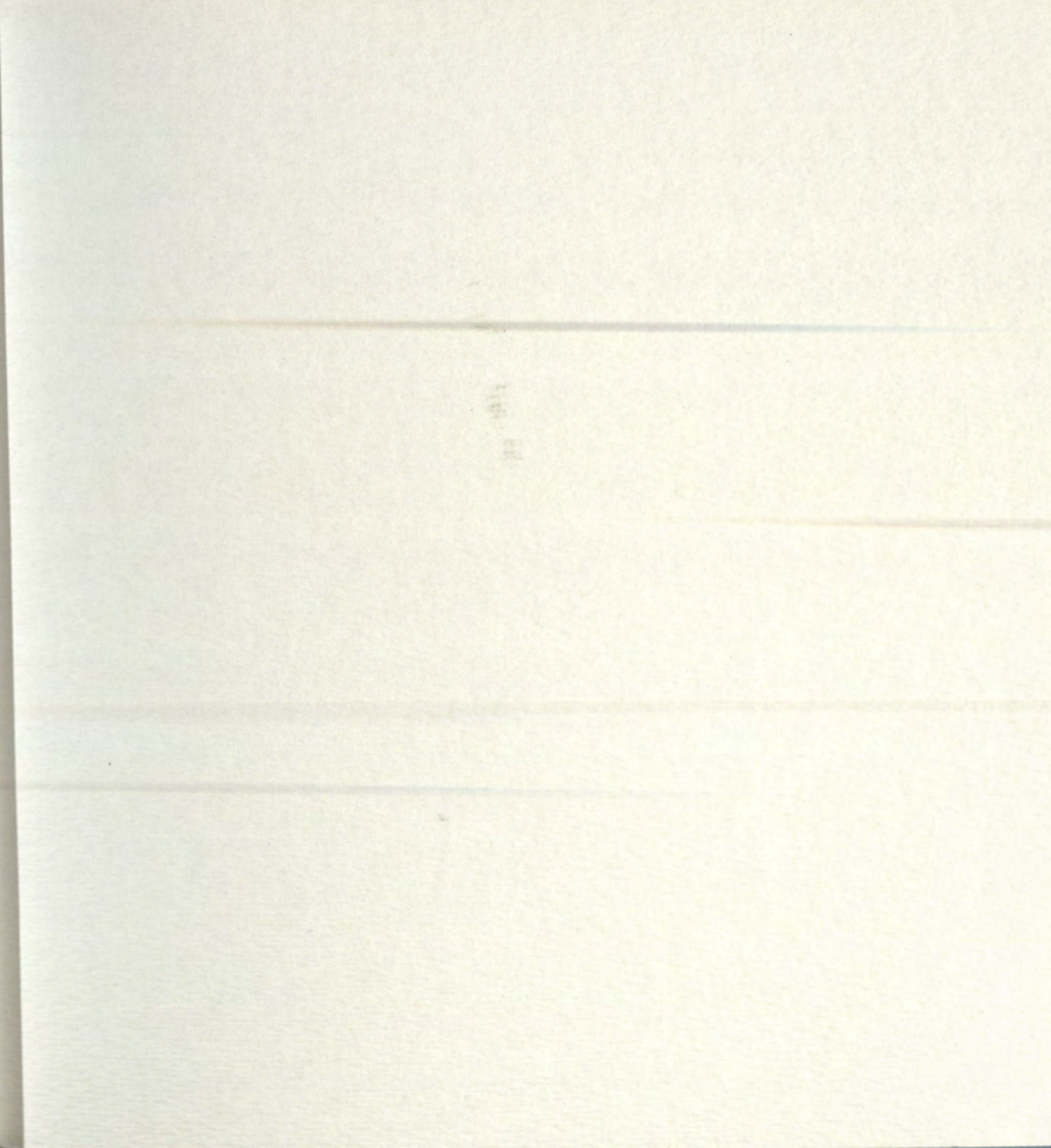
Sabrina Mangan does her best to capture anything that provokes emotion. A lot of the work that she edits digitally is done with contrast adjustments and not much of anything else. She believes that it's really important to develop your own style and not spell everything out for the viewer. With photography it tends to be a little trickier to convey multiple messages but it's something to strive for. She loves what she does. All she wants is for her viewer to feel something (hopefully that she doesn't suck).

Hannah Smith wants to thank her friends for hanging out and inspiring some artistic flow.

Justin Vining grew up on a farm in northern Indiana and is inspired by the rural landscapes surrounding us. His undergraduate experience was at Purdue University. He majored in art education and fine arts with a minor in art history. After graduating, he taught elementary art for three years at Maple Ridge Elementary in Pendleton, Indiana. As a teacher, he was inspired by the creative minds of his students and painted more than ever. Currently, he has decided to take his life in a new direction, one he did not foresee. He is a first year law student at Valparaiso University and is willing to follow this path wherever it leads. As he moves forward he will continue to create, using his artwork as an avenue of personal expression.

Jennifer Yaros enjoys reading and writing because both pursuits allow her to submerge herself in human experience, whether familiar or unfamiliar. She feels that the lives and emotions explored in one's favorite texts contribute to a sense of universal connectedness and serve to remind anyone and everyone that we are not alone.

the **Lighter** is currently accepting art and literature submissions for the spring 2008 edition

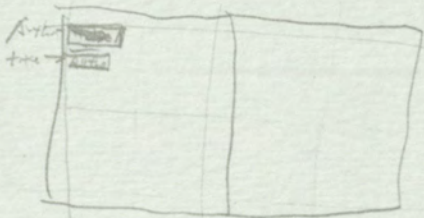




Solution

Assets

work
forecast



the Lighter